



Lead with Vision

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What do you want to achieve? Where are you going? Having a vision – a strong sense of where you are going and how you will get there - is an essential building block to achievement and influencing others.

Having vision is having a distinct mental picture of what success looks like. As in Stephen R. Covey's 2nd habit from his #1 national bestselling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, it is having a clear understanding of your destination. It is having a successful end in mind.

In conjunction with having vision, influence is the ability to pull people into your vision. It is communicating your vision in a way that attracts people to your cause like a magnet. Through your sense of purpose, belief, passion and enthusiasm, you get others excited and pull them into your vision.

In contrast, when people and organizations lack vision, they lack purpose and enthusiasm. They often compensate for its absence in dysfunctional ways. They let the urgent supersede the important. They operate with little intentionality. They immerse themselves in tactical execution with little regard to the level of value being created.

Not that a focus on tactical execution is inherently wrong, but without a guiding vision, execution can become “busyness” instead of “business”. As in target shooting, as the target gets further away and fades into the distance, the aiming is less precise and the results no longer hit the mark.

Phillips Brooks, a nineteenth century author said *“Very strange is this quality of our human nature which decrees that unless we feel a future before us we do not live completely in the present.”*

Organizations lacking a clear vision are like people going on a vacation without a map or an intended destination. They drive and drive, finding a few spots of interest along the way, but never getting very excited or focused on the destination given they don't know where they are going.

Organizations without clarity of vision and purpose become focused on goals, typically financial ones, often to the exclusion of longer term objectives. Goals become hollow numbers without any meaning or purpose. Strategies become less about innovative and intentional activities and more about reactive tasks. Whatever pops up often takes the place of initiatives that produce long term sustainable success. If there is a purpose, it is simply to “make the numbers” which is about as clear as “drive the car, drive the car.”

If you are in a position of influence and want to lead your organization to peak levels of performance, cultivate a purpose. Make clear the reason for your organization's existence and the unique contributions your organization provides. Paint a clear vision. Describe the future that you and the team collectively aspire to create and achieve. Let others know their role and the value of their contribution. Generate enthusiasm and emotion. Connect with their inner desires. Articulate the guideposts that will define your journey. Present symbols and stories that appeal to their hearts as much as their minds.

These practices will go a long way to improving employee buy-in, morale and teamwork. They too will improve tactical operational efficiency and decision making all leading to long term sustainable performance gains – that start now.